

# How to Hunt Your Kin Or First Steps in Genealogy Research



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<http://www.ci.round-rock.tx.us/library/genealogy.html>

## How to Hunt Your Kin Or First Steps in Genealogy Research

**Focus on one family or surname at a time.** In looking for your own sixteen great-great grandparents or even your eight great grandparents, you will acquire many, many families and just as much paper. Genealogy can become discouraging and overwhelming unless you concentrate on part of your family history at a time. Just as important as focus is **documentation**. Even if you believe that what you are doing is just for yourself and no one else, correct source documentation will help you know exactly where you found a particular piece of information. In genealogy, you always have to retrace steps, yours and others. Make it easier by using correct documentation. Consult *Evidence! : citation & analysis for the family historian* GEN 929.1 MIL for correct formats.

1. **Begin with what you know.** Use an ancestry, or pedigree, chart to record the family information you already know. You want full names, dates for births, marriages, and deaths, and locations for these events. From the blanks on this chart, you will see where you need to begin. Sample forms are in the Genealogy Information binder located on top of the black microfilm cabinets. The beginning genealogy websites on the library's genealogy resources page will also have basic forms you can print out. One of those is the Ancestors website: <http://www.pbs.org/kbyu/ancestors/charts/>.
2. **Talk with family members.** You may be surprised at how many of your relatives have already done some genealogical research. Their stories, photos, and other documents may give clues to other information sources and help fill in those blanks on your chart.

3. **Organize what you've collected.** Genealogy can soon overwhelm your house with an avalanche of paper. Try to stay organized from the beginning. Use ancestral charts and family group sheets as basic tools. A family group sheet records essential information about each family unit in a compact manner.  
For more information on beginning and organizing your genealogy, look at the following books and the library's genealogy resources webpages for Internet links on beginning genealogy.  
*Unpuzzling your past* NF 929.1072073 CRO  
*Organizing your family history search* NF 929.1 CAR  
*The Researcher's guide to American genealogy* R 929.1072 GRE
4. **Survey completed research.** This step can avoid time spent researching families that someone else has already worked on. You will have to verify their sources but their work may open up new avenues for research.
  - i. Begin with the Internet site [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) and search both the Search for Ancestors area and the Family History Library Catalog. Use the catalog to find microfilm on your family or locale. Borrow this microfilm from your nearest Family History Center.
  - ii. Check the US Genweb Project at [www.usgenweb.com](http://www.usgenweb.com) & Roots-L <http://www.rootsweb.com/roots-l/> for both your family and locale. Rootsweb also has family trees you can search through.
  - iii. Check the Periodicals Source Index, PERSI. The library has PERSI on CD and it is also available on *AncestryPlus*. PERSI indexes many genealogical periodicals by surname, locality, and title, and subject. PERSI also mentions which large collections carry that title. The library has a growing collection of genealogical periodicals.

- iv. Search the 5 volume set of ***Genealogies in the Library of Congress*** located at GEN 929.1 LIB.
- v. Many of the genealogies in the previous item plus many, many other items such as local histories, published & unpublished vital records, genealogies, directories, gazetteers, and biographical works are available full-text from ***HeritageQuest Online***. This database is available on all networked library computers and from home for remote patron access. This database contains the full-text images of over 25,000 genealogical works.

This will undoubtedly fill in some blanks on your charts but create other gaps. From those gaps, decide which types of records will most likely have the information you seek. The following webpage has a "Records Selection Table" to help you decide what records would most likely produce your desired result:

<http://www.familychronicle.com/records.html>

- 5. **Find and search the records.** You will want copies of birth and death certificates, marriage licenses, military records, deeds, etc. These types of records are the primary sources for proving your family was here or did that. To begin with, look at books like ***Ancestry's red book: American state, county, and town sources*** located at GEN 929.1072073 ANC or ***The Handy book for genealogists*** at GEN 929.1072 HAN for courthouse addresses and what records each may have. There are many printed, CD-ROM, and online indexes to records available. Consult the sources mentioned previously, including the library catalog. If the Round Rock Public Library System does not have the resources for your search, there are several options.
  - i. **Interlibrary loan.** While most libraries do not loan out genealogical materials, two options are the St. Louis County Public Library's circulating Local

History & Genealogy Collection at <http://www.slcl.lib.mo.us/slcl/sc/sc-genpg.htm> and Mid-Continent Public Library's circulating genealogy collection at <http://www.mcpl.lib.mo.us/ge/heartland/>. Interlibrary loan is a good option if you want copies of articles or a copy of the index or table of contents to a work. This is also a good option for borrowing microfilm from other libraries and historical societies. Make interlibrary loan requests at the circulation desk on the first floor. You must have a Round Rock public library card to use this service.

- ii. **Check the WorldCat database** either at the Round Rock Public Library or from home, for cardholders, through the library's website. See what libraries own the titles you are interested in. Maybe a library nearby has the title.
- iii. **Contact the library and/or the genealogy society in the place you are interested in.** You may be able to find someone whom, for free or a fee may search the records and send you copies of what they have found.
- iv. **Purchase the materials yourself.** Search rare and used book websites like: Alibris <http://www.alibris.com> Addall <http://www.addall.com/> Bibliofind <http://www.bibliofind.com/> Beware, this can be addictive!
- v. **Check the collections of other local libraries.** Not everything is in WorldCat so also search for the library catalog of the place you are searching.

- 6. **Get the record.** Once you have located where an event happened, make sure you get a copy of the document itself and not

just a printout or the abstracted page from a periodical. You can get the appropriate birth, death, marriage, or divorce record request forms from the book, ***International Vital Records Handbook*** GEN 929.373 KEM or try <http://www.vitalrec.com/> to see if the state or courthouse is on the Internet and will take a request online. Verify the cost before you send your request.

- 7. **Record and document the information you have learned on your charts and begin the process again for another ancestor.**

Genealogy is fun, exciting, and rewarding but it also requires a lot of research, patience, and dedication. People have spent decades searching for an ancestor. Do you need ideas to jump-start a stalled search or need some genealogical reference help? Feel free to contact **Elizabeth L. Johnston** at [ejohnston@round-rock.tx.us](mailto:ejohnston@round-rock.tx.us) or stop by the library on Sunday 1:00-5:00, Monday 3:00-9:00, or Saturday 9:00-2:30 and visit with her personally.

For information about the library's collection, consult *The Guide to the Genealogy & Local History Collection at the Round Rock Public Library* brochure or visit the library's genealogy website.

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